



Shirewode

J. Tullos Hennig

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Book Two of The Wode

The King of the Shire Wode. That is what they will call you...

Home razed by Church edict, loved ones struck down by treachery, Rob is left for dead. Taken by the old druid master into the deeps, Rob survives to emerge as driven leader of a band of tight-knit outcasts, claiming the forest as their own and wielding the Horned Lord's vengeance with silent, deadly arrows. Gamelyn has fled England, only to return after finding new identity and purpose—but no absolution—on Crusade. When the two boyhood lovers next cross paths, it will be in a brutal, blindfolded game of foxes and hounds, one which pits Templar assassin against Heathen outlaw. When Rob discovers Marion is also still alive, the game turns.

History will chronicle Robyn Hood and Guy de Gisbourne as the deadliest of enemies, but the reality is complicated—and infinitely more tragic.

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Shirewode Details

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Author : J. Tullos Hennig

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From Reader Review Shirewode for online ebook

Jesse says

A few years have passed since the events at Loxley that forever changed the lives of Rob, Gamelyn, and Marion (not to mention several others). Each, in his or her own way, is lost...stumbling toward their destiny...toward their *tynged*. The game isn't over yet, not by a long shot.

Gamelyn--now Sir Guy de Gisbourne--returns to his homeland from the Crusades. Rob--now Robyn--rules the *Shire Wode* and has grown into the Robyn Hood of lore. Marion is in the last place one would think to look for her, drifting, waiting for the Archer and the Knight to set her free.

Once again, J Tullos Hennig does not disappoint. On the contrary, *Shirewode* knocks it out of the park for me. This book is wonderfully strong and satisfying and very much a story in its own right; not just a continuation of *Greenwode*, but something more. Something so much better.

First, there is the story itself. Plenty of twists and turns, and the whole gamut of emotions. This is a story that draws you in, *invests* you in its outcome. I read this book much more slowly than most books I read simply because *I did not want it to end*. It's that good. The struggles, triumphs, and failures of the characters really endeared them to me.

Which brings me to the characters. I am big on characters, and character development. It's one of my favorite parts of reading, and loving, a new book. And there is much to love, here. We get glimpses into the personality of each of the 'band of merry men' (no small feat, to cover this many characters and make them all seem vivid and unique). And Little John, of course...there is definitely a spot in my heart for John. His quiet strength, his knowledge that things just are the way they are (I confess I want to give him the biggest hug). Marion is another one whom I want to hug. To say she 'steals the show' isn't fair, because she doesn't really steal the show in the meaning of detracting from other characters. She definitely doesn't take anything away from Robyn and Gamelyn, yet she *builds* on their relationship...and shines brightly on her own...in a way that is really brilliant. Once again I echo my comments from *Greenwode* in saying that many stories which have a male-male love interest at the forefront generally don't have any really vivid female characters. Well, this story does, and just like its predecessor, it has more than one! Marion is the type of person you'd always want on your side. And Siham is also a great character...I definitely liked her too.

And then, of course, there's Robyn and Gamelyn. As a couple, they're irresistible. It is *so* satisfying to read a love story that goes the way I want it to. So many times I read stories, or watch movies, that come close, but are missing something. *This* story isn't missing anything. Robyn's and Gamelyn's relationship is too complicated to sum up in one word...but the combination of love and rivalry is heady, to say the least. Incendiary, is more like it! They are both strong, rugged, 'strapping' lads if you will...which really makes it *so* satisfying to see them paired together, because it is an amazing pairing.

I'll probably come back and add more to my review later...I just finished the book today, and I'm still mesmerized by the whole story...so more points will come to me later. Anybody who likes adventure, daring, lots of plot twists, emotions that get right in there and *squeeze* mercilessly at your heart and soul...then you have to read this book.

Someday, my dream would be to write something even half as good as this. *Shirewode*, along with *Greenwode*, are at the very top of my list of all-time favorite books, and I know I will read them over and over again. This book choked me up a few times...and also made me cheer twice as much. I love Robyn and Gamelyn and Marion and their adventures and sincerely hope we will see more of them :)

Val Kovalin says

SHIREWODE by J. Tullos Hennig opens three years after the first book GREENWODE (you should read these books back-to-back to get the best sense of the story.) The three principal characters are Guy de Gisbourne (who was called Gamelyn in the first book), Robyn Hode, and Marion. Robyn and Guy were once lovers, and Marion is Robyn's sister.

Now Robyn Hode is living in Shirewode forest with his band of outlaws, robbing from the rich and giving to the poor. He has changed the least of the three main characters: still cheerful, mischievous, and down-to-earth, though tempered somewhat with new awareness of his responsibilities as a leader. Meanwhile, Robyn's sister Marion has lost her memory and now lives in Nottingham as a novice nun, working as a servant to the evil Abbess. She is still level-headed and capable, trying to overhear things and get her bearings even though she is at a grave disadvantage. And Gamelyn, once Robyn's lover, has by far changed the most. He has returned from the Crusades with a new name, Guy de Gisbourne, and is now a stone-cold killer and a Templar Knight, haunted by his combat experiences.

The book opens when the Sheriff of Nottingham (who is also the brother of the Abbess) hires Gisbourne from the Templars to hunt down and kill Robyn Hode, who has become a serious threat to nobles and wealthy churchmen traveling through nearby Shirewode forest. Gisbourne accepts the job with barely concealed distaste because he dislikes the Sheriff on sight. Neither he nor Robyn knows each other's identity initially.

From there, the book launches into an epic adventure, paying homage to some familiar events that should delight fans of the Robin Hood legend – daring escapes and rescues, an archery tournament, and the extended appearance of Prince John Lackland who is a flamboyantly nasty character. But SHIREWODE puts its original stamp on the legend with a rich foundation of pagan lore complete with real pagan gods, the Lady and the Horned Lord, who step in to inhabit their avatars, Marion and Robyn. There is real magic, used sparingly and strategically, and vivid supporting characters. I especially appreciated the strong female characters of Marion and the daring Saracen archer Siham.

Gisbourne, however, steals every scene as he alternates between wounded innocence and cold, haughty menace. He is a terrific antihero, and in some scenes comes across as electrifyingly evil. Such a change from the character in GREENWODE, though traces of him remain. The intense sexual tension between him and Robyn finds release in only one sex scene. However, just the one scene seemed right for this book.

Will most readers enjoy SHIREWODE? I know I did, and I think others will, especially if they want less sex and more breathtakingly epic historic adventure. Some of the dialog, which is spelled to indicate a British country dialect, might be a challenge for English-as-a-second-language readers. But it is a stunning story that kept me turning pages even while I regretted coming to its end too quickly. SHIREWODE is a worthy sequel to the very good Greenwode, and I highly recommend both books.

M says

Enjoyed this much more than the first novel. That was more a Robin Hood origin story than anything else. Here we get into the meat of the tale. And I liked it.

Lindsay M. says

This series is all consuming, and I can't ask for much more than that from a reading experience.

I feel as if I've been on a lifetime of adventure with Robyn and Gamelyn. J. Tullos Hennig creates such a breathtaking world that makes it impossible to accomplish anything but hours and hours of reading and escapism.

These books are long, and many times I'm presented with unfamiliar vocabulary and language, but that only takes me deeper into the story. The characters have been created with such finesse and their personalities unique and unforgettable.

I almost don't want to read any other reviews, because this series touches me deeply, and any negativity sent its way will get under my skin. And I know this isn't for everyone.

It's truly a labor of love when an author puts this much effort into bringing a story to life.

Abi Walton says

on my second re-read of this incredible series I have to admit that I think I love this series more the second time round. I was captivated again by the Wode and the struggles of Gamelyn, Robyn and Marion go through. On the second read I felt more for Gamelyn than any other, even with the ice covering his heart and the grief clouding his vision.

Shirewode is set three years after the devastation that the first book finishes on, and the repercussions of this tragedy. Gamelyn, now Guy of Gisborne is a hard and unfeeling Templar who has been asked to take down the Wolfhead called Robyn Hood. Guy feels as though Rob's place has been filled by someone undeserving and grief and pain cloud his judgement. I really felt for Gisborne as he struggles to hide from what he did all those years ago when he was nieve and young and trusted the ones around him.

Robyn on the other hand still believes Gamelyn betrayed him and is brought back from the brink of death to seek revenge for his family. However three years later he believes Gamelyn to be dead at the Crusades and he has become head of the notorious group of Wolfheads, many who we encountered in the first book.

Robyn is still devoted to Gamelyn and their love for each other makes this book extremely special. The lengths these two will go to to be with one another had me on tenterhooks the whole way through even on my second read.

Before I re read these novels I found out there is to be another three books to this incredible series and I cannot wait to get my hands on them. This series has captured me and I could easily start reading the books again for a third time. Each time I delve into the Wode series I am always finding things that I have missed, foreshadowing that I had not understood on the first read through. Now these books sparkle with the magic of the wode and I will forever treasure them.

II would recommend this series to anyone who enjoys myth, folk-law, a twist to a tale and Historical Romance. I can promise you that if you buy these books you will not be disappointed.

Euraylie says

This is one of those stay-awake-until-3am-reading-on-a-work-day books.

It's also one of those books where you are at loss afterwards as to what to read next. You won't want to leave this wonderful world and its characters behind.

I've become somewhat stingy with my five-star ratings, but if there is one book that deserves one, it's "Shirewode".

Absolutely gorgeous and epic. I was reading with my heart in my mouth the entire time.

I loved the first part, but consider it more of a beautiful, extended prologue to this fantastic story. We got to know all the characters in the "Greenwode"; all the pieces were moved into place so we could have this highly original, meticulously researched and beautifully written reinterpretation of the Robin Hood myth with a m/m twist.

And speaking of the m/m element...I adored the twisted, heart-wrenching, wonderful romance. It's definitely not your typical lovers/rivals with all the gods against them tale.

I'm so glad the author hinted that there may be a continuation of their story in the future.

A last quick note, this series has been described as "fantasy" by some, and I know some m/m readers may be a bit wary of the genre, but "Greenwode" and "Shirewode" are definitely more magical realism than fantasy, as the story is very much set in 12th century England.

The Novel Approach Reviews says

Epic is such an overused word, but that's what this series is. It is bigger than the confines of the page. It is grand and glorious and a feast for anyone who loves the mythological adventure of heroes and heroines, enemies and villains, the battle of good and evil, the tales of those who know that without endings there can be no beginnings. Just as without beginnings, there can be no journey, no trials, no foes to best, no need for heroes, nothing to fight for and nothing to gain. J. Tullos Hennig's storytelling is dense with imagery and lush with the obvious love of the legends around which her artistry pays perfect compliment.

The Wode series, without a doubt, is well on its way to making my list of Top Picks for 2013.

You can read the rest of this review at [The Novel Approach](#)

Jax says

I don't have the words to do these books justice. This has been a reading experience like no other. I've come to love all of these characters and am so sad to leave them now, but it's been a glorious, unforgettable, epic adventure and I am totally and completely satisfied by this conclusion. I am grateful to the author for giving me this wonderful gift.

MLE says

Loving these. Review to come when I'm feeling more reviewerish.

Linda ~ chock full of hoot, just a little bit of nanny ~ says

Now this is more like it. I'm endlessly fascinated by this series and what the author has envisioned for these characters, and it has me wanting to read the original Robin Hood tales or maybe even suffer through Kevin Costner's lack-of-accent again. I want to know which characters - aside from the main, well-known ones - are part of the original tales and which ones are original characters to these stories, if any are. I'm also enjoying trying to figure out which characters will end up being who - as for instance, Friar Tuck. :D

I'm also pleased with how things turned out with Robyn and Gamelyn. They both had long, arduous - and separate - journeys to go on in this book in order to come back together again, so getting to see them grow up, as it were, away from each other was pretty neat. I especially like that Marion also gets her own story here, though I thought it took a little too long to come back around to her after the prologue. Still, her "reintroduction" was well-done, and Ms. Henning keeps all these threads well-balanced. It's a complicated, complex story, mixing history (The Crusades), fantasy (the old gods), and legends of our own times (the Knight Templar, and of course Robin Hood himself). And since this wasn't about two boys falling in love, but two men learning to trust again, there was much less sex and a lot more plot, and when there was sex it was plot-relevant and character-driven.

Ross Pendleton again narrates this one and does a stellar job. The only thing that can be rather confusing - until you realize what's going on - is the transitions between what's going on in the real world and what's going on in the otherworld or when the characters are having dreams or visions. In the books, these sections are italicized, but there's just no easy way to make that kind of distinction in audio format without using things like echo settings or, IDK, chimes to mark the beginning and ending of each section. Frankly, I'd rather just be confused until I figure it out than have to put with that nonsense. ;-)

PS: For those only listening to the audiobooks - you're missing the little gap-fillers, or "Solus", at the end of each book. They're not very long and you don't miss anything vital by not reading them, but they do provide some extra character insights and whatnot.

Since it's been over three years since this audiobook came out, and two years since book 3 was released, I'm sadly not holding my breath that the last two books will be released in audio any time soon, so I'll be reading those.

Alison says

ETA: My fourth time reading this, and it's even more riveting now. Completely enthralling.

Incredibly good! I loved this so much! This series is so special to me. This is the second book in a superb historical fantasy series that re-imagines the Robin Hood myths. It does not stand alone, so do read the first book, Greenwode, before getting into this one. Pretty much everything I said about the first book applies to this one as well: amazing storytelling, amazing characters, amazing characterisation, amazing secondary characters, amazing historical setting, amazing writing, amazing feeling, amazing depth, and so on and so on.

It's awesome and so well done.

We catch up with our three heroes a few years after the end of the first book and things have changed a lot. They all lost everything and are not at all the same people they were in the first book, and, by circumstance or necessity, have since become Robyn Hood, badass outlaw forest lord and Sir Guy de Gisbourne, badass Templar assassin just back from the Crusades (and I won't talk about Marion because that's not in the blurb). This is a grand, epic story, full of excitement and adventure and magic and love and darkness and so much feeling. It's very satisfying and a vivid reading experience, and the story is not over yet. As with the other books in this series (so far), this is on the long side (over 170,00 words/550 pages), but it never feels long and it's very well paced. It's even better on re-reading. I love that the female characters in this series have agency and are interesting, important people in their own right. I feel like I understand all these characters so well, and they are so well drawn and so real. This series is completely all-consuming and has a special place in my heart. I think it's stunningly good.

Carole Cummings says

- 1) A love of words and how they're put together
- 2) An appreciation for in-depth characterization
- 3) An admiration for grand, striking world-building
- 4) The ability to just *let go* and let the author take you where the story leads
- 5) Oh, and a nice long chunk of available time to read without interruption

These are the things you'll need to appreciate the 'Wode series the way it should be appreciated. And I'm serious about that last—don't read this on the bus to work; don't read it while you're working out at the gym; don't try to squeeze in 15 minutes on your lunch break. Set aside a weekend, stock up on snacks and comfy pillows, send the kids off to the grandparents and your SO off to... wherever your SO goes, turn off your phone and just... *sink in*.

This series is a story of so many things—right and wrong, whose truth matters when it comes to “right” and “wrong”, who has a right to decide who God is and what God wants of us, whether or not "right" or "wrong" has anything to do with love, politics and family and love and betrayal... There are so many Big Picture aspects to this story, all brought 'round and intersected with the smaller picture lives of the three main characters. It's a testament to the author's knowledge of the history and her skill with words that all of these aspects intersplice to *mean something*, to speak to the reader in ways that touch the heart and tweak at our own moral ambiguities, make us think them through and name them, define them so we may understand them better, and through them relate to each character, be they “good” or “bad”. We may not agree with the villains in this story—or even the heroes sometimes, for that matter—but the author makes sure we know why they are who they are, the history that made them, and she leaves us the opportunity to understand them if we so choose.

I'm not sure many understand the skill that takes. Then again, as readers, we don't really need to; all we need to do is sink in, let the words wrap around us and take us away into the worlds of Rob and Guy and Marion, take their hands and let them show us, *listen* to them as they tell us, *feel* with them while they break our hearts and rebuild them.

This series is not merely words on a page. It's an experience. Often painful, at times infuriating, sometimes frustrating, occasionally sensually erotic, and always, *always* sensuously authentic. It's an experience that demands to *be* experienced. Let it pull you in.

Paul says

5 STARS

Audiobook Production 5 STARS

As a lover of fantasy and high fantasy Shirewode (The Wode #2) is not the kind of novel I'd usually gravitate towards as I'm not a fan of Robyn Hood, but this was just fantastic.

I had absolutely no idea that book #1 Greenwode, was setting the scene for book #2 to become a M/M take on the tale of Robyn Hood.

It is extremely well written and the narration is excellent. The MC's obviously make this book because they're just so strong in their convictions due to such great writing and are both larger than life. When you have a headstrong young druid that's just received his pagan birth rite that falls for the son of a king who is educated in the ways of the new religion and is pious to boot, well lets just say things get interesting. They were also quite young when they meet too, but as they grow older that's when the trouble begins in earnest.

The other main players are also fantastic which is something I personally enjoy a lot within a long book, and by not keeping it too insular character wise within such an epic it enriches it for me. The extra personalities made this book shine, as do all the delicately woven sub-plots that keep branching out and coming together so well.

What begins as angsty young love between a druid boy and a christian prince soon changes to star crossed lovers and moves on from angst to tortured souls. They're extremely sad but also funny at times but in general they're really quite heart wrenching.

Serena Yates says

This second book of the retelling of the legend of Robin Hood is as fascinating and thought-provoking as the first. It is actually far more than a retelling or a reinterpretation, and that becomes more obvious as this series progresses. J Tullos Hennig has taken the basics of the stories as we know them and has built a whole new world around that foundation, including magic and a complete spiritual lore. This series presents the battle of the Pagans versus the encroaching Catholic church in a new light, one that sounds very plausible to me. I was as fascinated and impressed with the story and the world in this second instalment as I was in the first.

Rob of Loxley has gone through hell. His home has been destroyed, the ones he loved struck down, and he himself has been left for dead. But with the help of the old druid master, he survives and emerges stronger than ever before. He now leads a band of outcasts, and any pretense of accepting the new system or religion is gone. He is out for vengeance and shows no mercy.

Gamelyn Boundys, Rob's childhood friend of noble descent, has turned his back on "the lore of the forest" and is trying to fit within the confines of the church – away from England as he joins the Crusades. But he can't find peace either and goes through his own version of hell. When he returns, he is a Templar assassin and becomes a pawn in the church's game against the Heathen outlaw named Robyn Hood.

These two men have gone from childhood friends, then lovers, to deadly enemies – or so it seems. But old

bonds are still alive, even if under the surface, and Marion still being alive despite having been captured and brainwashed by the church, jolts everyone awake. The plot thickens as the game deepens, and the relationship that seemed so simple between the three when they were younger turns out to be far more complicated than they could have ever imagined.

If you like epic fantasy set in a world that is close enough to our own to make things truly interesting, if you enjoy a dramatic action adventure with more than a few twists and enough political intrigue to move you to the edge of your seat, and if you're looking for a spellbinding read, then I can fully recommend this book. I think it is an amazing achievement and can't wait for the release of the third volume, hopefully this October!

NOTE: This book was provided by Dreamspinner Publications for the purpose of a review on Rainbow Book Reviews.

retro says

Liked it a lot better than Greenwode. Tighter plot, far more action, fewer vision quests. The bad guys got what they had coming to them and the ending, unlike in the previous book, was not some ridiculous cliffhanger.

Could have done with more from Marion, but then I'm one to always be rooting for the Maiden. Gamelyn/Guy and Rob/Robyn have finally achieved that level of maturity where they can kick each other's asses and still be in love: entirely my cup of tea.

Finally, it's really nice to read a gay romance that's both filled with adventure and tension, and still focuses on the love story.
